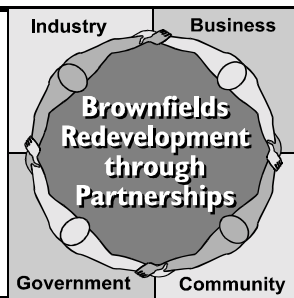


<p style="text-align: center;">City of Niagara Falls, New York Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot</p> <p>U. S. EPA, Region 2 290 Broadway New York, NY</p> <p style="text-align: right;">October 2001</p>	
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Program Information

The EPA Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is an abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial or commercial facility where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived contamination. Since 1995, EPA has funded more than 300 Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, enabling localities to clarify environmental contamination issues in order to facilitate redevelopment. Pilot funds are for site assessment, reuse planning and related community involvement. EPA Region 2 provides direct support to the States, Tribes, counties, municipalities, and communities of New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands as they continue to seek new methods to promote site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

I. Overview

In April 1997, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) selected the City of Niagara Falls, New York (population 61,840) as a National Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot and in March 2000 awarded the City Supplemental Assistance. Niagara Falls is located in the western portion of New York State. Historically, Niagara Falls was home to numerous industrial and manufacturing businesses. However, between 1960 and 1990, industries began to leave the area and subsequently Niagara Falls' population dropped by one-third as its manufacturing base declined. The abandoned and idle sites that remain are a major problem for Niagara Falls because no tracts of undeveloped, uncontaminated land remain for development within the city. Brownfields cleanup is imperative for economic growth and the environmental risks associated with these former industrial properties must be defined to enable successful redevelopment of the properties.

The City of Niagara Falls has identified at least 35 abandoned sites where former industrial activities may have contaminated the underlying soil and groundwater. These properties have become unmarketable due to this perceived contamination. Thirteen of these sites are located in the Highland Avenue Neighborhood.

To date, seven sites in the Highland Avenue Neighborhood, a State Empire Zone (EZ), have been addressed under the Pilot. Because the sites are located in an EZ, the City will be able to offer tax credits and utility rate reductions to new or expanding businesses. As part of its long term redevelopment goals, the City of Niagara Falls has designed a mixed-use plan for the Highland Avenue Neighborhood.

The Highland Avenue Neighborhood District is a relatively small, self-contained area of the City, approximately 560 acres in area, with land almost equally distributed between residential and industrial uses. Over time, the housing stock has become severely blighted due in part to the incompatible mixed land use of heavy industrial and residential. Deterioration of local housing has also been influenced by socioeconomic factors and increased urban flight from the city.

Many of the area's older residential structures have been demolished leaving little evidence of the original development pattern.

The City was also recently selected to receive Supplemental Funding Assistance from EPA, \$150,000 to continue work on its Brownfields Program's pre-remedial activities. It is anticipated that the City will focus on sites within the Buffalo Avenue Corridor, also an EZ.

The City of Niagara Falls, in collaboration with Niagara County, received an EPA Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund grant. In addition, the City of Niagara Falls teamed with the City of Buffalo and the State University of New York - Buffalo for a Brownfields Job Training Pilot. The Team intends to train 40 to 50 participants from the region as environmental technicians. The Training Pilot will target the unemployed, underemployed, minorities, and welfare to work residents living in brownfields impacted neighborhoods.

II. Brownfields Pilot Progress

Implementation Strategy

The City's goal is to provide guidance to interested parties on the redevelopment of underutilized and potentially contaminated properties. The City has a systematic approach toward the redevelopment of abandoned properties which includes community outreach, risk assessment, and environmental education. For each site targeted in the pilot, the City develops cost estimates for rehabilitation, demolition, and clean up and identifies potential financing sources. The pilot is currently administered by the City's Environmental Services Office.

The City of Niagara Falls hired the redevelopment consulting firm, Parsons Transportation Group, DeLeuw, and Cather to assist the City in the development of the Highland Avenue Redevelopment Concept Plan. The redevelopment plan, developed in collaboration with the City and the Highland Community Revitalization Committee, identified constraints and opportunities related to brownfields development in the neighborhood. In June of 1999, the Highland Avenue Redevelopment Concept Plan was named "The 1999 Outstanding Planning Project" by the Western New York Section of the American Planning Association.

The City has partnered with Niagara County, the City of Buffalo, the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to develop new approaches to obtain community involvement and to stimulate brownfields development on a county-wide level.

Community Involvement

A committee comprised solely of residents of the Highland Avenue neighborhood, entitled the Highland Community Revitalization Committee, was formed in November of 1997. The committee has recently incorporated itself into a community based development organization, named the Faith Based Collaboration, in order to receive Community Block Development Grant funding for administrative, outreach, neighborhood preservation, and project implementation activities. The Faith Based Collaboration is a broad based alliance of residents and community leaders from local associations, schools, churches, and social service agencies. The community group provided significant input to the neighborhood redevelopment plan. The community group currently meets on a monthly basis.

In addition, the City of Niagara Falls retained Mustard Seed Productions to coordinate citizen outreach and input. Outreach activities coordinated by Mustard Seed Productions include community interviews, the preparation of newsletters and fact sheets, and the coordination of public meetings.

III. Brownfields Site Activities

Site Inventory

The City of Niagara Falls has identified at least 35 abandoned sites in Niagara Falls where former industrial activities may have contaminated the underlying soil and groundwater. Site assessment and redevelopment efforts have focused on seven of the sites in the Highland Avenue neighborhood.

Site Selection

Sites selected for assessment and redevelopment were based on the potential to revitalize economically disadvantaged areas, provide jobs, augment the city's dwindling tax base, and limit urban sprawl and infrastructure maintenance costs.

Site Assessment and Reuse Planning

Mixed land uses proposed by the City for the pilot sites include: light industrial/manufacturing/assembly; warehousing/distribution; neighborhood commercial; open space; and residential (single and multi-family). Seven properties in the Highland Avenue Neighborhood are being addressed under the pilot program. These sites include: Union Carbide, UDC/Ninth Street, 3416-3502 Highland Avenue, Power City Warehouse, Maryland/James, Maryland/Maple, and the Hazorb Site. Please refer to the individual site profiles for more information on the sites that are being addressed under the pilot program. In addition, the City will use supplemental Pilot funding to begin site assessment work on four sites in the Buffalo Avenue neighborhood. The City is also assessing three other sites within Niagara Falls using other funding mechanisms.

IV. Measures of Success

Properties Estimated in Brownfields Pilot Area: approximately 100

For the entire Pilot area, the number of properties/parcels which have been identified by the Pilot as brownfields. The Pilot area includes the entire jurisdiction of the Pilot (e.g., the entire City of Chicago or the State of Minnesota), not just the specific area(s) that the Pilot has defined as target areas.

Properties Reported to be Contained in Pilot Inventories: 35

For the entire Pilot area, the number of properties/parcels which have been included in an inventory of brownfields properties/parcels. Types of brownfields inventories include: lists, spreadsheets, and databases (geographic information systems or other forms). These inventories may include lists such as a foreclosure list of abandoned industrial sites, a state list of no-further actions sites, etc.

Properties Reported to be Targeted by Pilot: 14

For the entire Pilot area, the number of brownfields properties/parcels the Pilot reports it is "targeting", or at which the Pilot says it will conduct, is conducting, or has conducted activities such as assessment, cleanup planning, facilitation of redevelopment, community outreach, etc.

V. Non-Site Specific Funding Leveraged

Funding that has been leveraged under the pilot program, but cannot be attributed to any one site.

A. Non-Site Specific Funding Leveraged for Assessment

Funded by: ☐ Local (City) ☐ Local (County) ☐ Private ☒ State ☐ Other Federal

Amount Funded: \$14,300

Additional information concerning funding: Empire Development Corporation

B. Non-Site Specific Funding Leveraged for Cleanup

Funded by: ☐ Local (City) ☐ Local (County) ☐ Private ☐ State ☒ Other Federal

Amount Funded: \$450,000

Additional information concerning funding: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (\$450,000)

C. Non-Site Specific Funding Leveraged for Redevelopment

Funded by: ☐ Local (City) ☐ Local (County) ☐ Private ☐ State ☐ Other Federal

Amount Funded: \$_____

Additional information concerning funding:

VI. Current Activities

Niagara Falls is also part of the Niagara Region, NY brownfields effort which includes the Cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls and the Counties of Niagara and Erie. The effort is a unique regional collaboration to reverse declining economic conditions through brownfields cleanup and redevelopment with a focus on the Niagara Region's role as an international portal.

In October 2000, the Niagara Region was selected by EPA as one of 12 Nationwide Brownfields Showcase Communities. Showcase Communities are recognized for their innovative and successful approaches to addressing complex brownfields problems and are expected to serve as role models for other communities facing similar situations. Under this program, the community is awarded additional funding and continues to receive a wide range of technical assistance intended to link Federal, State, local and private sector action in the redevelopment of brownfields. More than 15 Federal agencies have established an Interagency Working Group to assist Showcase Communities.

VII. Contact Information

Pilot Contact:

Name: Mike Jurkowski
Title: Brownfields Coordinator
Organization: City of Niagara Falls, Dept. of Environmental Services
Address: City Hall Room 306
745 Main Street, P.O. Box 69
Niagara Falls, NY 14302-0069
Phone: (716) 286 - 4462
Fax: (716) 286 - 4454
E-Mail: mjurkows@nfedz.org

EPA Contact

Name: Sherrel Henry
Title: Brownfields Project Manager
Organization: United States Environmental Protection Agency
Address: USEPA
290 Broadway, Floor 20
New York, NY 10007
Phone: (212) 637-4273
Fax: (212) 637-4360
E-mail: henry.sherrel@epa.gov

For more information on EPA's Brownfields Initiative visit EPA's website at:

National Website <http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf>
Regional Website <http://www.epa.gov/r02earth/superfnd/brownfld/bfmainpg.htm>